

ALABAMA'S

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First Chinese language food service sanitation class proves successful in Montgomery County

Communication is frequently a problem when educating food service managers and workers, but thanks to public health environmentalists, especially instructor Anna Sun, language difficulties have been minimized for many restaurant employees in Montgomery.

James Reynolds, environmental director of the Montgomery County Health Department, said, "Our job is to do the best we can to help owners be more knowledgeable about safe food handling and to see that rules are complied with. Having an environmentalist on our staff who can speak Chinese is a huge asset for us."

This class came about after a standardization training done by Tim Hatch of the Bureau of Environmental Services and Robert Lewis, public health environmentalist at Montgomery County. They indicated that many workers were not getting a full understanding of the food service sanitation information they needed. Enter Ms. Sun, a native of China, who has been an environmentalist with Montgomery County for almost five years. She was asked about teaching this class in Chinese and agreed to take on this new task.

After Gene Hill and his staff from the Computer Systems Center installed Chinese language software on her personal computer, Ms. Sun typed in the Chinese characters for the presentation. She worked with Hatch to translate a course from English. Hatch prepared the Powerpoint presentation and collected food pamphlets, laminated posters and other materials in Chinese.

"This was a joint effort in planning," Reynolds said. "After inquiries from Ms. Sun, it was determined that a Sunday afternoon between 2 and 3:30 p.m. would be about the only time when a sizable group of restaurant employees could attend."

The food service sanitation class in the Chinese standard language was scheduled for the afternoon of Sunday, Feb. 20 in a classroom at Auburn University at Montgomery. Ms. Sun had called to remind the people who had enrolled about the specifics, and she and the



This slide in Chinese illustrates and emphasizes the importance of keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold. It also cites the code requiring these practices.

environmental staff at Montgomery County expected that perhaps a handful would actually be present. But all were surprised when 30 attended the training class.

Ms. Sun said, "Teaching contamination and cross-Chinese course.....continued on page 2

Chinese course.....continued from page 1

contamination is difficult because it's very hard to translate these concepts in Chinese. Certain words are not in every language, and other adjustments are needed. In China, the Celsius scale is used to measure temperatures, so the required temperatures were listed that way with the Fahrenheit readings in parenthesis."

Class participation was excellent. The subjects covered included temperature control, hygienic practices and pesticide control. Many questions were asked and answered.

At the conclusion of the training, all participants were provided a Certificate of Attendance using the Chinese alphabet to spell out their names. The consensus was that the course was a BIG success.

Trina Griffin of the Bureau of Environmental Services sent an e-mail summarizing the course, stating, "The response was outstanding. The participants received valuable information to use and implement in their restaurants. Thanks to Anna, Tim and James Reynolds, Environmental Director for Montgomery County Health Department, for the hard work and effort in making the course a success."

Several of the class who attended asked for additional training. One man asked whether he could get a tape of the presentation to share with his Chinese-speaking wife who was unable to attend.

Mitzi Chesser, assistant environmental director at Montgomery County Health Department, was instrumental

in ensuring the timely scheduling of the class. Among those present at the afternoon course were Ron Dawsey, director of the Division of Food/Milk/Lodging; Hatch; Ms. Griffin; and Pamela Lockett, Ms. Sun's supervisor at Montgomery County.

Ms. Sun came to this country in 1985 with her husband, an exchange student studying in Buffalo, N.Y. She earned a degree in biology at AUM and then worked in laboratory research at Alabama State University. Reynolds hired her to work in public health in 1999. While she had learned basic English in college in China, she has continued to learn a lot about the language while in this country and has heard and learned to understand a wide range of accents while employed at the health department.



Photo by *Tim Hatch*
Public Health Environmentalist Anna Sun instructed a food service sanitation course entirely in Chinese.

Alabama Department of Public Health

Mission

To serve the people of Alabama by assuring conditions in which they can be healthy.

Value Statement

The purpose of the Alabama Department of Public Health is to provide caring, high quality and professional services for the improvement and protection of the public's health through disease prevention and the assurance of public health services to resident and transient populations of the state regardless of social circumstances or the ability to pay.

The Department of Public Health works closely with the community to preserve and protect the public's health and to provide caring quality services.

ALABAMA'S HEALTH

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Informational materials in alternative formats will be made available upon request.

Deer 'break in' leads to damage but no injuries in Butler

Office Manager Vickie Abate and the other staff at the Choctaw County Health Department in Butler feared the worst when they heard a loud noise come from the clinic end of the health department on a Tuesday afternoon.

Ms. Abate and employees Debbie Ford, Sheri Downey



Photo by *Bart Robinson*

Three whitetail deer charged into the Choctaw County Health by breaking glass in the lobby. The lone surviving and severely wounded deer thrashed around the lobby, several offices and the mechanical room before escaping.

patients or clients were in the building that afternoon.

"It was very frightening," said Ms. Abate. "No one was sitting at the front desk, but in the back we heard a bam and then two more loud noises real fast."

At first they suspected that the noise came from gunshots. Ms. Ford was closest to the front entrance at the time, and she left her cubicle and began yelling, "What was that?" Ms. Abate was typing in her office in the back when she heard the noises and Ms. Ford shouted, "A deer is headed to your office."

Ms. Abate recounted her harrowing experience in getting out of the panicked deer's path. "The deer looked straight into my eyes as it ran down the hall toward my office and then I ran around my desk and jumped up in the chair against the wall." The deer then attempted to jump out of the double-paned windows in Ms. Abate's office, but only broke one of the panes in her unsuccessful attempt to jump out.

Deer blood and hair was everywhere, including on the papers on her desk. The tense co-workers were concerned for each other's safety, but Ms. Abate reassured them, "I'm out of the way."

The wounded and frightened deer came back to the front, thrashed around in the Vital Statistics area and even jumped over the service counter and tried to break through

the glass.

Meanwhile, two other workers who were holed up in an office had also called for emergency assistance and then Ms. Downey called 911 from the rear of the building. The deer ran into the mechanical room where the department's main computer is located and wandered around more.

When the Butler Police Department arrived, the doe was physically exhausted, lying on the floor and had lost so much blood that the police officers had her penned down and were able to put a dogcatching loop around her neck to drag her outside. But then the deer got loose and charged the storage unit in the back of the building and did even more damage. Finally, the doe escaped into the woods behind the building never to be seen again.

"It's an experience we don't want to repeat," Ms. Abate said emphatically.

One window of the health department was broken out completely and two others were partly broken. Insurance does not cover damage done by wild animals, and the amount of deer blood left throughout the building was significant. A cleaning service was called in to remove the blood, deer hair and deer odor.

"We are very thankful there were no patients in the health department. We're still in shock about this," Ms. Abate said.

The health department is located next door to the Choctaw County Department of Human Resources and is adjacent to a private school with a playground. Had the deer jumped into either of these buildings, injuries to children or adults in the waiting areas or classrooms might have resulted.

After the incident Ms. Abate laughingly told her son who hunts, "Travis, I killed more deer than you did this season! It was an experience."



Photo by *Bart Robinson*

Extensive cleanup was required to remove the trail of blood left on the walls, desks and floor by the deer.

Choctaw County Health Department: A Place for Man and Beast

Public health employees from throughout the state were informed by e-mail that the Choctaw County Health Department had to be closed temporarily and that the telephones were under repair. Many of us wondered the reason before deleting the e-mail.

Kim Taylor of the area office penned this humorous article one day after the incident poking a little fun at the serious situation and lending humor to a difficult situation. It is being printed at our request.

February 15, 2005

In a desperate attempt to access public health care, three deer crashed through the Choctaw County Health Department entry glass doors on Tuesday, Feb. 15. Two of the deer died on impact while the third got expedited services thanks to the clinic manager. Due to

HIPAA regulations, the names of the deer could not be released.

Initially drug-seeking was thought to be the motive; however, once officials learned the doe was accompanied by her two yearlings, it is believed the mother was seeking condoms and birth control pills.

Area Administrator Ruth Underwood expressed her thoughts on the tragedy saying, "They will be dearly missed."

In an unrelated story, WIC will launch its "Reindeer... it's not just for Christmas" campaign by issuing venison vouchers in Choctaw County.

*By KIMBERLY M. TAYLOR, MPH
Tuberculosis Control Program Manager
Public Health Areas 7 and 9*

Cleburne Elementary School project promotes dental hygiene through ALL Kids

The ALL Kids Children's Health Insurance Program, in cooperation with the Cleburne Children's Policy Council, the Cleburne School Foundation and the Cleburne Health and Nutrition Council, promoted good oral hygiene to elementary school students in recognition of February as Dental Health Month.

Each elementary school student in the county was provided a packet containing toothbrush, toothpaste, floss and information from both ALL Kids and Medicaid about dental coverage as well as information about how to brush and floss correctly. The packets also contain information about how parents can get coverage for their children from ALL Kids, Medicaid or the Alabama Child Caring Program.

Paula Clark, the ALL Kids Regional Coordinator for Cleburne County, says, "The organizations are very excited they could offer this opportunity for children and families to learn more about good oral hygiene and about the healthcare coverage available to them."



All elementary school students in Cleburne County received packets filled with dental supplies and information during February.

Announcing the Alabama Public Health Hero Award Call for Nominations

He courageously calls attention to the health plights of our fellow citizens.

She works to develop programs in our communities to prevent disease, promote health, and improve access to needed health care services.

He strives daily to make certain that our water is drinkable, that our air is clean, that our roads are safe, and that our food is fresh.

She answers "Why Not?" when told some project or program or idea simply won't work.

Who are Alabama's Public Health Heroes?

Our State is replete with people working in health departments, public and private clinics, city, county, and state governments, schools, businesses, industry, and as volunteers to improve the health and quality of life for the citizens of Alabama.

The UAB School of Public Health wants to honor one of these dedicated and often unsung people as Alabama's Public Health Hero 2005.

Through the generosity of the Hillcrest Foundation, the UAB School of Public Health will honor this year's Public Health Hero with \$1,000 in recognition of her or his public health achievements. The award for 2005 will be presented on May 6, 2005, at the School's Honors Ceremony.

Take a moment to think about all the people you know who work daily to improve the health and well-being of Alabama's citizens.

Now, nominate your candidate for the Public Health Hero Award for 2005 by completing the nomination form on page 6 and return it by Tuesday, April 5.

If you have any questions, please call Max Michael, M.D., at 205-975-7742 or via e-mail at maxm@uab.edu.

Alabama to Announce Injury Prevention Plan

Injury is the leading cause of death for children and young adults 1-34 years of age. Injuries affect everyone, regardless of age, race or economic status, and are a substantial and preventable public health problem. In 2001, there were 3,178 deaths due to injuries such as motor vehicle crashes, falls, fire, suicides and homicides. The State of Alabama Injury Advisory Council, composed of over 30 state agencies, organizations and private entities, all dedicated to preventing injuries in Alabama, has joined together to create and publish "Injury in Alabama, A Focus on Prevention" which will be unveiled in a special proclamation ceremony.

Please join the Honorable Bob Riley, Governor of Alabama; Dr. Donald Williamson, State Health Officer; members of the Alabama Legislature; the Baldwin Academics and Magnet School Choir and survivors of unintentional and intentional injuries for this special occasion to work together to prevent injury in Alabama. You and your friends are invited to attend the proclamation ceremony announcing the Injury Prevention Plan and recognizing the many agencies and organizations who work every day to ensure Alabamians are safe.

WHAT: PROCLAMATION CEREMONY TO ANNOUNCE THE ALABAMA INJURY PREVENTION PLAN

Scheduled speakers are Gov. Bob Riley, State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson, and survivors of unintentional and intentional injuries.

WHEN: THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2005, AT 9:30 A.M.

WHERE: STATE CAPITOLAUDITORIUM

Street level of Capitol facing North Union Street (Auditorium is across from Alabama Statehouse and Folsom Building) Montgomery, Ala.

Early arrival is recommended to secure parking. The trolley is available at 9 a.m. at Union Station on Water Street. You may park behind the train station to catch the trolley. Cost is \$1 one way.

CONTACTS: Melissa Khan, 334-206-5541

Nancy Wright, 334-206-5314

Alabama Public Health Hero for 2005

Nomination Form

I. Name _____

Address _____

Street _____ Office Phone _____

City _____ Home Phone _____

II. Describe nominee's occupation or volunteer role:

III Describe how nominee works to improve the health of Alabama's citizens through efforts that address communities at large. Communities can be defined in many ways, by geopolitical boundaries (state, county, city), by risk group (infants at risk for sickness and death because of premature birth and/or birth defects; individuals at risk of diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, dementia, depression and other forms of mental illness, etc.), or by educational, financial and insurance status that limit access to care.

(You may attach additional sheets to answer this.)

IV. Letter(s) of support (optional)

Please return completed form including letters of support by Tuesday, April 5, 2005, to:

Max Michael, M.D.
Dean
UAB School of Public Health
RPHB 140, 1530 Third Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35294-0022

If you have questions about this nomination form, you may call Dr. Michael at 205-975-7742 or email him at maxm@uab.edu.

TB Elimination-Now is the Time

When someone asks Nancy Keenon, director of Alabama's Tuberculosis Control Division, about the issue of health disparities between African Americans and Caucasians, she has one answer from her division—"We have a plan and the plan is working." Under Keenon's direction the division works to fulfill two primary responsibilities, tracking and treating tuberculosis.

The control of tuberculosis (once the leading cause of death) is a core public health function. Through the commitment of a group of physicians, laboratorians, nurses and field staff, the control of tuberculosis in Alabama has become a reality. Keenon illustrates this point by noting that in 1951 over 2,600 persons in Alabama had the disease as opposed to the recent report in 2004 when there were only 211 cases of tuberculosis reported.

"Do you see how far we've come?" asks Keenon. Keenon credits the work of those who guided the Tuberculosis Division through the years along with dedicated field staff, but she makes clear that the work is not over.

"TB is retreating, but the battle is far from over," Keenon warns.

In particular, the proportion of tuberculosis cases among African Americans versus that among Caucasians reveals a clear disparity. Although African Americans constitute only about 25 percent of the total population in Alabama, nearly 53 percent of all reported cases between 1999 and 2003 were found in the African American community. In 2003 alone, 78 percent of tuberculosis cases reported among children less than 15 years of age were African American. And perhaps the most accurate measure of the disparity is the "case rate" for tuberculosis. During the past five years, the case rate among African Americans is 12.7 per 100,000 versus 3.5 among Caucasians. That means for every 13 African Americans with TB, there are fewer than four Caucasian cases.

Review and analysis of tuberculosis morbidity conducted by Keenon and her staff have led to the development of a three-part plan to reduce the burden of tuberculosis in the African American community.

1. The division has identified a common factor when investigating reports of active tuberculosis disease among African American children. This factor, the so-called "diagnostic delay," has been observed in three separate areas across the state. The first part of the

division's strategy will be to expand training opportunities for health care providers serving African American communities. Reducing "diagnostic delays" is critical to the interruption of transmission and the prevention of secondary cases (often found in the very young). In 2005, the division will develop and test "targeted" provider training. Beginning in 2006, the division will conduct at least one targeted provider training in each major metropolitan areas of the state. This training will continue for the duration that funding is available from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

2. Timely diagnosis also facilitates timely initiation of contact investigations. In the second part of this strategy, division field staff will improve how they identify, evaluate and bring to treatment persons in the community who have been exposed and infected with tuberculosis. Contact investigation and the treatment of latent infection can prevent secondary cases of active disease. Renewed commitment to the minority community includes the development of partnerships with the Office of Minority Health and others who have traditionally served the African American community. These partnerships are deemed necessary in order to help prepare the division's field staff for the challenge of operating across cultural and economic barriers. This enhanced training for cultural competency has already been initiated, and will be required for all field staff upon hiring. Existing staff will be required to attend as part of the annual training plan.
3. The third part of this strategy requires recognition of a disturbing fact - that African Americans are disproportionately represented in the state correctional system. The rate of incarceration among African Americans is greater than 2-to-1 when measured against all others in the system. The division currently assists in the evaluation and investigation of persons with active disease in the state prison system, and has identified

March 24 is World TB Day-a day set aside to recognize the discovery of the TB bacillus. Observance of this day is intended to raise awareness about the devastating health and economic consequences of TB.

TB.....continued on page 8

Commendations

Health department employees who are listed here have received letters of commendation recently. To recognize other employees, please send letters through your supervisors or the state health officer to *Alabama's Health*.

Georgette Blackmon
Center for Health Statistics

from Suzanne Watkins
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Connie Danner
Center for Health Statistics

from David and Sandi Barbour
Youngsville, N.C.

Florine Croxton
Center for Health Statistics

from Haley D. Justice
Montgomery, Ala.

Tina Dooley
William Duncan
Shenell Fuller

Dick Haas
Ken McBeth
Ray Sherer

Kent Speigner
Suk White
Angie Wright
Center for Emergency Preparedness

from Thomas Babington
Montgomery, Ala.

Earl Langley
Emergency Medical Services

from Arrol Sheehan
Montgomery, Ala.

Reginald Strickland
Center for Health Statistics

from Katheryn Kennedy
Montgomery, Ala.

Lynn Williams
Center for Emergency Preparedness

from Andrea Barclift
Albertville, Ala.

TB.....continued from page 7

opportunities to treat latent infection and prevent cases of active tuberculosis disease from occurring in homes and communities after an inmate's release. Division field staff will conduct monthly site visits and chart reviews in each prison facility following the completion of each case/contact investigation. These monthly visits are currently expected of the division's field staff - as well as the requirement that staff remain engaged with the warden and his/her facility to assure inmates with latent infection complete therapy.

"Our goal is to gradually reduce the burden of disease over the next five years. We know that this plan will work and there may be ways to accelerate the decline," says Keenon. She understands, however, that TB will be difficult to eliminate. "It will require us to communicate the advantages of preventive therapy more clearly and it will require more than words. Once the community sees and believes in the actions of our staff, once we have earned the trust of the community, then we will be better able to reduce the rate of TB."

For more information on tuberculosis infection and disease, please contact the Tuberculosis Control Division at (334) 206-5330.

Retirements

The following employees have retired from service recently:

February -

Michael Peters - HIV/AIDS Division

March -

Patricia Bray - DeKalb County Health Department

Carole Hall - Madison County Health Department

Eva Jackson - Lawrence County Health Department

Jo Mathis - Tuscaloosa County Health Department

David Rossley - Office of Program Integrity

Child safety seat checkup event draws large crowd

Motor vehicle crashes are the No. 1 killer of children in Alabama and the nation. Statistics indicate that four out of every five child safety seats are used improperly. Realizing the importance of having car seats checked for proper installation, the Montgomery Area SAFE KIDS Coalition held a car seat safety check Feb. 19 at a local General Motors dealership.

With widespread media advertising promoting the event, a large number of people sought car seat safety checks. Many volunteers were present at the Saturday checkup, including coalition members and representatives from State Farm Insurance Co. Sixty-three car seats were checked and nine car seats were donated to families who needed seats or replacements. The number of vehicles checked and seats installed for the day was 72. Of the seats given to those families, six were donated to replace unsafe or recalled seats and three were for children who arrived at the checkup event without a car seat.



Photo by *Earl Langley*
Alison and Daniel Smelik of Montgomery view the infant seat they purchased for their new arrival.

In addition to ensuring the seats were safe and installed correctly, health education was provided to the parents who attended. For example, Certified Technician Amanda Calhoun, health educator with the Injury Prevention Division, cautioned a parent whose child's toys were scattered throughout the back seat, "Be sure to place loose objects in a secure place within the car, such as in a netted pocket, or in the trunk."

Older children were asked to stand against the wall to be measured for booster seats. Teddy bears were given to younger children.

Montgomery residents Chenique Jefrees and her mother

came to the checkup event with their son and grandson respectively, young Jady Miller. Ms. Jefrees said, "We saw the commercials on TV, and my mother has a car seat because she picks him up from daycare. He has ridden in a car seat since birth and we wanted to make sure the seats were installed correctly." Another volunteer technician advised the parent and the young child when checking and refitting the seat, "It's just like trying on new shoes."

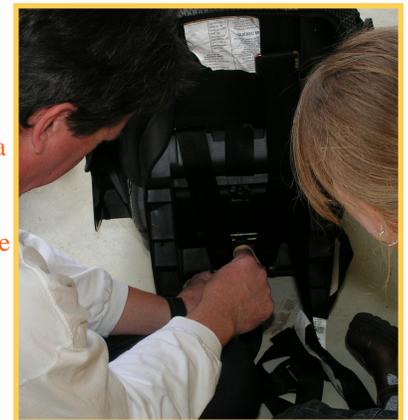


Photo by *Earl Langley*

Correct installation is all-important before a child takes that first ride in a car safety seat.

Expectant parents Alison and Daniel Smelik of

Montgomery felt fortunate that the event was being held just in time for the arrival of their baby. They had purchased an infant seat and wanted to make sure it was installed properly from the first ride home from the hospital.

The Montgomery Area SAFE KIDS Coalition has scheduled other checkup events in the near future.

Coalition Chairperson Melissa Khan, who is an epidemiologist with the Injury Prevention Division, said, "This has been one of the Coalition's most successful events in the Montgomery area. For us, just one child sent home in a correctly installed seat makes these car seat check events worth while to everyone involved. Today alone we were able to ensure 72 children were safer on their ride home. We are thankful so many parents took the time to come to this event and learn about the proper installation of safety seats."

Volunteers also included Nancy Wright, director of the Injury Education Branch; Earl Langley of the Division of Emergency Medical Services and Angela Jenkins of the Montgomery County Health Department.

Health department clinics now use advanced test for cervical cancer screening

The Alabama Department of Public Health has begun using an advanced, liquid-based Pap test for all cervical cancer screenings performed in its 89 clinics. More than 125,000 Pap tests are performed each year in public health clinics.

The new standard of cervical cancer screening is the ThinPrep® Pap Test,™ a liquid-based Pap test, which is currently used in a large percentage of all Pap tests done in the U.S.

“The Alabama Department of Public Health has always been committed to providing our clients with the best new technology to detect cervical disease early,” said Dr. Thomas Miller, director of the Bureau of Family Health Services. “After a thorough evaluation, we decided to make this new test available to all women receiving Pap smears in our health departments.”

According to the National Cancer Institute, approximately 10,500 women in the United States are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year and close to 4,000 will die of the disease. Cervical cancer is almost 100 percent curable if detected early. More than 30 published studies with over 500,000 patients have shown the test to be significantly more effective than the conventional smear for the detection of cervical abnormalities.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the ThinPrep® Pap Test as a “significantly more effective” replacement for the conventional Pap smear. This is a liquid-based test that employs a fluid medium to collect and preserve cervical cells. Specimens are first collected by the clinician with a cervical sampling device, just as with the conventional test, so there is no difference for the patient. Then, instead of smearing the cells on a slide, the device is rinsed into a ThinPrep® vial capturing virtually all of the cells.

The specimen is next sent to the laboratory where a ThinPrep® processor eliminates obscuring debris and distributes a uniform, representative thin layer of cells on a microscope slide. The system improves the quality of the specimen, which can result in more accurate diagnoses and fewer unnecessary repeat tests. This effective test saves both time in getting treatment and cost by avoiding the repeat visits by the woman.

“The clinical evidence in support of the use of the ThinPrep® Pap Test is extremely strong, and the test has clearly caught on with obstetricians/gynecologists in Alabama using this test as standard of care in their

practices,” said Dr. Ronald Alvarez at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. “With this decision, the health department is making sure that all women will have access to this clinically-proven technology, which could ultimately help us detect disease earlier in more women across the state.”

Routine Pap testing, whether with the newer method or with the standard test, reduces deaths from cervical cancer and also reduces the incidence of the disease by identifying pre-cancerous conditions that are treatable. The following are the American Cancer Society recommendations for cervical cancer screening: Cervical cancer screening should begin about three years after a woman initiates vaginal intercourse, but no later than 21 years of age. Cervical screening should be done every year with regular Pap tests.

At or after age 30, women who have had three normal test results in a row may get screened every two or three years. A doctor may suggest getting the test more often if a woman has certain risk factors such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection or a weakened immune system.

Women 70 years of age or older who have had three or more normal Pap tests results and no abnormal results in the past 10 years may choose to stop cervical cancer screening.

Screening after a total hysterectomy, with removal of the cervix, is usually not necessary unless the surgery was done as a treatment for cervical cancer or pre-cancer. Some other special conditions may require continued screening. Women who have had a hysterectomy without the removal of the cervix should continue cervical cancer screening at least until age 70.

Prostate cancer activist and department urge awareness of second most common form of cancer

Prostate cancer is the second most common form of cancer in the state of Alabama, and more than 70 percent of all prostate cancer is found in men 65 years of age or older.

Prostate cancer is characterized by the abnormal growth of cells, and it affects the walnut-size gland which surrounds the urethra in a man. While scientists do not always agree on the risk factors for the disease, studies continue to investigate the influence of high hormone levels, diets high in animal fats, and diets low in fruits and vegetables.

Racial disparities are noted in the prevalence of the disease as well as in mortality rates. According to the Center for Health Statistics, the death rate for African American men supersedes the rate for any other racial/ethnic group. In 2003 in Alabama, white males experienced 20.7 prostate cancer deaths per 100,000 population, while the rate of prostate cancer deaths for black and other males was 35.6 per 100,000 population.

Lawrence McRae of Tuskegee became a prostate health activist two years ago. He started by standing on street corners, handing out business cards which read, "When last have you had your prostate checked?" He also places educational posters in men's rooms in many counties. Today McRae is the founder of the McRae Prostate Cancer Awareness Foundation.

McRae is dedicated to educating the public. He said, "Poverty, embarrassment, fear and incontinence issues often prevent men from seeking help until it is too late. People need assistance in getting the information."

To date, more than 500 individuals have been interviewed because of McRae's efforts. He continues to distribute thousands of pieces of cancer prevention materials throughout the Black Belt and other rural regions of the state. The pamphlets were obtained from the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program. His dream is to one day own a cancer screening van.

McRae and the Alabama Department of Public Health want men to recognize the signs of prostate cancer which may include:

- spasms that interrupt urination
- a slow stream of urine
- frequent urination
- pain or discomfort during urination
- sharp pains in the rectum or anal area
- a continuous dribble or not being able to stop urinating

- the inability to completely empty the bladder
- evidence of blood or urine stains
- bone pain
- loss of sex drive
- kidney failure

Men are encouraged to ask their doctor about the benefits and risks of getting a digital rectal examination (DRE) and, if they are age 50 and older, having a Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) test. Men with a family history of the disease or who are in a high-risk category should begin screening at age 45. The most important thing a man can do is understand screening tests, treatment options, and make an informed decision.

According to the American Cancer Society's "Facts and Figures 2005," Alabama is expected to have 4,360 new cases of prostate cancer and 530 men are expected to die of the disease this year.

Many cancer deaths are attributed to lifestyle factors such as tobacco use, diet and physical inactivity. These are areas in which Alabamians can make changes that affect their risk of developing cancer and other chronic diseases.

For additional information about prostate cancer call the following toll-free numbers:

1-800-ACS-2345 - American Cancer Society

1-800-4-CANCER. - National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

1-800-242-2383 - American Foundation for Urologic Disease



Lawrence McRae wants to ensure that men are aware of prostate cancer symptoms and treatment options.

By KYLE REYNOLD

March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, National Eye Donor Month, National Kidney Month, National Nutrition Month, Save Your Vision Month, National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month.



Calendar of Events



March 16

Home Health Aides and Home Attendants, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Brenda Elliott, (334) 347-2664, extension 402.

March 22

American Diabetes Alert Day

March 24

World Tuberculosis Day 2005

April 4-10

National Public Health Week. This year's focus is on healthy aging and is dedicated to empowering Americans to live stronger, longer.



April 6

Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Michele Jones, (334) 206-5655.



April 7

ADPH Statewide Staff Meeting, 3-4 p.m. For more information contact Video Communications, (334) 206-5618.

April 18

Health and Safety Fair, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Biscuits Stadium, 200 Coosa St., Montgomery. For more information contact Melissa Khan, Injury Prevention Division, (334) 206-5541.

April 20

Alabama Public Health Association Pre-conference Seminars-Professional Services Leadership Day, Bryant Conference Center, Tuscaloosa.

April 21-22

Sixth Annual Rural Health Conference and Alabama Public Health Association 49th Annual Education Conference, Bryant Conference Center, Tuscaloosa.



May 4

Addiction in Women, Public Health Staff Development, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Annie Vosel, (334) 206-2959.



May 5

Home Health Aides and Home Attendants, 2-4 p.m. For more information contact Brenda Elliott, (334) 347-2664, extension 402



May 6

Emotional Aspects of Bioterrorism (SCCPHP), 12 noon-1:30 p.m. For more information contact Video Communications, (334) 206-5618.